

Growth Element

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Growth Element is to establish policies that will lead to sustainable growth over the next 10-20 years by promoting more efficient coordination of land use, transportation, and infrastructure development. The policies and plans outlined within this Element are designed to sustain high quality of life within Surprise, protect natural resources, and drive economic vitality by ensuring that necessary public facilities are completed in harmony with both existing and new development.

DISCUSSION

The City of Surprise's population is projected to reach approximately 750,000 residents upon build-out of the City's Planning Area. This means, with a current population of just over 123,000 residents, there is significant opportunity for growth within the City over the next 10-20 years and beyond. Where and when growth is accommodated has major implications on the outlay of infrastructure, service levels and on the costs to maintain City operations and infrastructure. Therefore, the ability to wisely manage and direct growth to key strategic locations is critical for Surprise's continued success and prosperity.

This element provides the direction for managing this expected growth by creating a link between planned land use, transportation, and infrastructure facilities with specific implementation techniques such as zoning ordinances, capital improvement programs, impact fee requirements, and design guidelines.

Growth Management Strategy

While demographics, market trends, community needs, and land resources often drive growth, development must be strategically planned and phased to maximize the efficient use of urban facilities and services.

Through the use of smart growth policies that promote development near existing transportation options, public infrastructure, and

community facilities; foster distinct, attractive communities with a strong sense of place; and preserve open space and critical environmental areas the City has developed a strong policy framework to guide growth management in a sustainable way, which reflects the community vision established within the General Plan 2035.

Recent Growth and Development Patterns

Recent Growth

Over the decade of 2000 to 2010, Surprise had an astounding population growth rate of 281%, making it the 6th fastest growing city in Arizona over that time frame. The current population of Surprise is approximately 123,000 (2013 US Census estimate) and continues to grow at a steady pace. Affordable housing, an abundance of parks and open spaces, quality schools, sustainable employment opportunities, connected transportation systems, sense of community pride, and a low crime rate are just a few reasons that contribute to a superior quality of life that draw incoming residents to Surprise.

Historically known as a community that caters to the active adult lifestyle, Surprise has experienced an infusion of younger families that have helped generate more diverse services, recreation and retail shopping opportunities in Surprise over the past decade. In fact, the median age in Surprise is now 36.8 years old (2010) and was 46.1 years of age in 2000.

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Like the majority of fast growing cities, Surprise has its challenges with achieving an appropriate jobs to housing balance that ensures a sustainable growth model into the future. Much like the population, the labor force in Surprise has shown positive growth of 4.7% over the last 10 years. However, Surprise experiences a significant amount of daily workers migrating out to jobs in other cities throughout the region. In 2011 Surprise had a workforce of 42,440 people, of which 38,734 of the residents commuted to work outside of Surprise. Whereas 10,148 people commute into Surprise for work and only 3,706 people both live and work in Surprise.

This condition has caused Surprise residents, elected officials and employers to place an importance within the General Plan 2035 on reducing the current trend of residents commuting elsewhere for higher paying, professional wage jobs.

Development Patterns

The analysis of Surprise's present development pattern is one of the fundamental steps in formulating a growth plan for the City. The evaluation of current land use patterns coupled with the understanding of existing and planned transportation corridors, public facilities and environmental constraints, enables a determination of development potential to be made for the remaining undeveloped portions of the planning area.

Up to today, the majority of the City's growth has largely been concentrated within the southeastern portion of the City's planning area. This roughly 40 square mile core area is bounded by Grand Avenue (US 60) on the north, Peoria Avenue on the south, Beardsley Canal on the west, and Dysart Road to the east.

Growth within this area has historically been dominated by sprawling low-density suburban development on former agricultural lands. Of this development, a large concentration of active-adult communities are located north of Bell

Road, while traditional single-family communities are primarily located south of Bell Road. Smaller clusters of multi-family development are also scattered throughout this portion of the City.

Along with their foundation of suburban residential development, the City maintains a service base of commercial, business and industrial uses. Retail and service uses are generally concentrated along Bell Road and Grand Avenue, while neighborhood type retail and service uses are located at the intersection of many major arterials within the central core of Surprise. However, with the development of Loop 303, additional regional retail and service uses have begun to concentrate along this important regional transportation corridor.

The planned Surprise Center District, or downtown, is also located within this core development area and is currently comprised of Surprise's spring training facilities, community park, aquatics and tennis center, and the City Hall and Public Facility complex.

Almost all industrial development currently within the City constitutes light manufacturing, distribution and storage facilities. These uses are generally located along the existing BNSF railroad line in the southeast portion of Surprise as well as at the north east intersection of Bell Road and Grand Avenue.

The remaining portions of land north of the Beardsley canal within the City limits and the larger Surprise planning area is predominantly undeveloped. However, the limited land use that does exist in this area is diverse and has a significant impact on the future growth of Surprise. Most notably, the Luke Air Force Base Auxiliary Field #1 (AUX 1) is located along Happy Valley Road, west of 211th Avenue. Immediately adjacent to AUX 1 is the Ford Proving Grounds, which borders the Northwest Regional Landfill.

In addition to these large non-residential land uses, several existing residential land uses can be found in the vast Surprise planning area

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north of the Beardsley canal. Most residential development consists of smaller pockets of rural residential development scattered north of Jomax Road and south of SR 74, including the communities of Wittman and Circle City. However, multiple large scale suburban planned area developments are currently under construction along the 163rd Avenue alignment.

Growth Areas

With a planning area of approximately 302 square miles, growth in the City of Surprise has the ability to occur at many levels and in many directions. Growth areas are not static—they are prone to change due to outside influences such as market conditions and specific city needs. The Anticipated Growth Map shows where growth is highly likely and encouraged in the City. The growth areas are categorized by the type of development that may occur, and will be further defined as part of a city-initiated or private development-initiated specific area plan to better define land use, circulation and urban form plans for each area.

The following growth area descriptions identify a general narrative of each area's existing and desired future development characteristics. The intent is to provide a more enhanced picture of these areas that is in keeping with the recommended land uses identified in the Character Area Land Use Plan. Land use decisions affecting property within these growth areas should not only take into account these general descriptions, but should also be based upon future area-specific planning recommendations and appropriate design principles that may relate to future requests for development.

Residential

Cactus & Citrus: As some of the last available land within the existing urbanized area of Surprise, this growth area is well suited for

residential development. The defined arterial roadway system and Loop 303 freeway provide optimal connectivity for future residents to access destinations within Surprise as well as the larger region. Residential development in this area should reflect densities that respect existing adjacent development, while also fostering a population base that will promote future transit opportunities and support more intense non-residential development desired along the Loop 303 corridor.

163rd Ave Corridor: This area is already experiencing new residential growth as developable land south of the Beardsley canal is becoming more limited. With access along 163rd Avenue and Grand Avenue as well as close proximity to Loop 303, availability of existing services, and adjacency to desired open space linkages, growth in this area should include a full range of housing opportunities along with appropriately located commercial areas.

Sun Valley Parkway: While residential development may not occur in this area as quickly as other residential growth areas, this land is readily accessible with its placement along Sun Valley Parkway. Given the proximity to the White Tank Mountain Regional Park, this area is well suited to create a smooth transition from urban to rural residential land uses. The location of this area provides opportunities to define a more natural edge with the park that includes wildlife corridors and community trail linkages to a City-wide open space system.

Employment

Bell Road: The Bell Road corridor is largely built-out, therefore growth along this corridor is expected to be primarily infill development of vacant sites or redevelopment of underutilized properties. Much of this infill development should take the form of commercial, office and appropriately placed mixed-use projects. However, a potential exists for infill development to further degrade traffic congestion along Bell

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Road. Consequently, growth management strategies for this area should focus on the timely development of circulation system improvements related to infill development projects, such as the use of transit or other alternative transportation methods.

Railplex: This growth area is already a significant employment center within Surprise. The availability of extensive land resources combined with the placement of existing infrastructure and rail access, positions this area to immediately support a mix of export-oriented base sector activities, such as warehouse distribution, light or heavy manufacturing, research and development uses, and select business services. In order to support near term job growth in the City, development in this area should focus on supporting a variety of employment types from small and mid-size warehouse projects to large scale manufacturing. In addition, the maintenance of the “goods movement” infrastructure within this growth area is also important to remain competitive within the region.

303 Corridor: The 303 Corridor is expected to be a prestigious corporate center and high density development area. The strong connections this growth area has to the Loop 303 regional transportation system, as well as the local circulation system, makes this area appropriate for a mix of employment and residential uses. Development should create an attractive public realm and include provisions for enhanced community amenities, transportation and infrastructure, and other public services. Density, building design and streetscapes must support transit oriented development and must encourage the use of alternative modes of transportation as the preferred method of travel to and within this area.

Grand & Beardsley: As development occurs along 163rd Avenue, this growth area will play a prominent role in providing a variety of employment opportunities, such as office and institutional jobs and regional shopping services. Access to Loop 303 will also help to

draw people beyond the adjacent residential neighborhoods to this mixed use area. The relationship between these various uses and their impact on one another and surrounding residential neighborhoods deserves special consideration. With the BNSF rail line and Beardsley canal running through this area, it will be critical to provide adequate connections to the surrounding planned residential neighborhoods and open space linkages to ensure this area is not an isolated development. Consideration should also be given to take advantage of future mass transit systems that might be built along the existing BNSF rail line.

Special Districts:

City Center: City Center or Downtown Surprise has a unique role to play in the 21st century development of the West Valley region. In addition to being the civic, administrative, legal, cultural, and entertainment center, downtown will also offer transit connections and is planned as an exciting pedestrian environment.

The downtown should be a vibrant city and regional center where residents are able to live, work and play. Most of this area should integrate a diverse, but compatible, cluster of land uses where residents, employees, shoppers, tourists, and students can gather in a well-designed mixed use environment. Development should exhibit high architectural and urban design standards where the public realm is inviting and the street network is supportive of alternative modes of transportation.

Heritage District: The Original Town Site (OTS) of Surprise currently includes over 16% of undeveloped lands within its boundaries, in addition to many vacant properties. Therefore future growth in this area is envisioned to have a strong focus on providing much needed services for the residents living within the Heritage District, while protecting and expanding the cultural aspects of the City's roots. The revitalization of the Heritage District will provide a balanced approach to heritage neighborhood

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renewal and a heritage arts, culture, and entertainment-oriented development sector—providing unique cultural and heritage assets for the city as a whole.

The ultimate pattern of revitalization supports design strategies and public improvements that capitalize on the cultural aspects of walkability and “front yard-living” that provide the basis for a vibrant, culturally diverse community, while providing regional connectivity and expanded services.

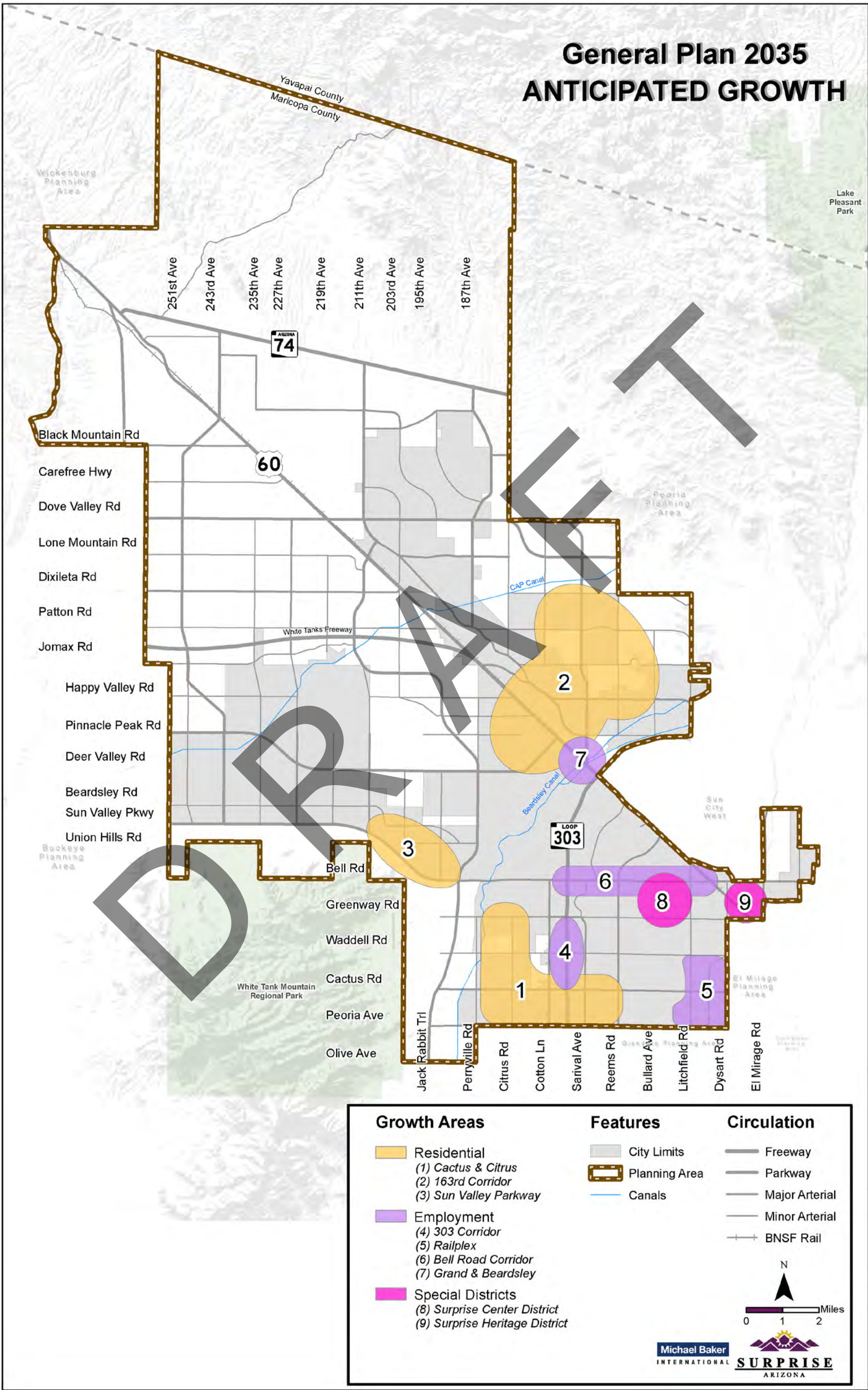
Current planning efforts for this area include the Village 1 Plan and the Specific Plan for the Revitalization of the Original Town Site that ensures the vision of future investment.

Managed Growth Areas

Managing growth not only involves the identification of those areas that are appropriate for enhanced development, it also requires controlling growth in areas that exhibit important natural resources.

Surprise has many significant natural areas that help give the City a unique identity. In order to protect and ensure that future generations will be able to use and enjoy these natural resource areas, some portions of the City require a more context sensitive development pattern. These lands include Sub Areas such as the Scenic Lands Development and Wildlife Linkages Corridor, and may also include additional key resource lands to be further defined through future studies.

To limit the density and intensity of development in these important natural resource areas and maintain an overall healthy and diverse environment, the City will utilize the various conservation goals and policies provided throughout the General Plan 2035 along with all accompanying existing and future planning policy documents.



GOALS AND POLICIES

GOAL 1: Support sustainable growth that ensures effective, efficient, and equitable provision of public services, land, and infrastructure.

Policies

- 1 Promote infrastructure expansion where it will be more efficient and effective, and minimizes adverse impacts outside the identified growth areas.
- 2 Give priority to infrastructure upgrades and improvements in the identified growth areas.
- 3 Focus infrastructure improvements in designated growth areas and contiguous to existing development.
- 4 Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost effective.
- 5 Promote and provide incentives for infill development, redevelopment and growth in existing urbanized areas.
- 6 Expand efforts to ensure all new development and future development includes community and stakeholder collaboration.
- 7 Promote sustainable and green building practices to lessen the demand on infrastructure.

GOAL 2: Emphasize efficient transportation to, from, and within growth areas, focusing on automobile, transit, and other forms of circulation.

Policies

1. Promote physical planning and design techniques that facilitate access to, and use of, transit services and other multi-modal circulation options.
2. Concentrate circulation infrastructure expansion in identified growth areas and coordinate improvements with development activity.

GOAL 4: Conserve significant natural resources and open space in the Growth Areas.

Policies

1. Allow for growth management strategies, such as the transfer of development rights, to conserve open space.
2. Strengthen connections between open space areas within, and outside of growth areas by identifying open space corridors between these areas.
3. Safeguard and maintain significant historic, archaeological, and natural resources in the growth areas.

GOAL 5: Foster the continued development of a unique and well-designed downtown.

Policies

- 1 Create and adopt design guidelines specific to the downtown area.
- 2 Promote art as an integral part of all downtown development.
- 3 Remove barriers that may hinder residential development in the identified downtown area.

GOAL 6: Protect the historic qualities of the Original Town Site (OTS) while promoting compatible, context-sensitive infill development.

Policies

- 1 Seek opportunities to leverage outside funding and incentives to promote growth in the OTS.
- 2 Identify local, state and federal resource programs and grant opportunities that can be used to enhance social programs and/or public facilities in the OTS.
- 3 Continue to work with other public, private, and non-profit entities to enhance needed services in the OTS.

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- 4 Create and adopt design guidelines specific to the OTS.
- 5 Continue to educate and inform residents of the value in preserving the heritage of the OTS.
- 6 Promote pedestrian connectivity as an integral part of all OTS development.
- 7 Encourage adaptive reuse of vacant properties to preserve cultural identity and invigorate underutilized areas.

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